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Send him out to seas that are much calmer

From Washington

LIKE A MAN without a war, Adm. Stansfield Turner spends many of his waking hours as director of central intelligence promoting the troublesome proposition that the constitution of the United States of America should not get in the way of his CIA spooks.

His insensitivity to the freedoms we have wrapped in the First Amendment to that constitution was never so evident as it was here the other day when Admiral Turner disclosed to the American Society of Newspaper Editors that he has resurrected the discredited Watergate-era practice of allowing journalists who are foreign correspondents to do a little moonlighting as spies.

He really doesn't understand why editors from *The Tampa Times* and other American and Canadian newspapers meeting in the nation's capital received the disclosure with such chagrin. He's a military man; the country needs covert intelligence information about enemies and potential enemies; therefore the ends of victory fully justify the means of deceit.

"I don't understand this," he declared, as we wondered about his real intelligence. "I really don't. It's just a request that you serve our country."

So simple. So patriotic. So dangerous.

It was during the era of President Richard M. Nixon, through the unhappiness of the Vietnam years and the disgrace of the Watergate years, that the misuse of the CIA was honed to a fine craft. So in response to that misuse, among other problems in the federal bureaucracy, Congress passed

the Freedom of Information Act.

Now Admiral Turner wants to repeal parts of the Foli Act, even though he admits that the only material damaging to the nation's security released under the law came because of government error. He just wants to make sure. He just wants to set at ease all the dictator governments of the world that supply us so much information and are just petrified somebody is going to find out about their clandestine activities.

"Intelligence is not a science," said the admiral. "It is a craft, sometimes even an art."

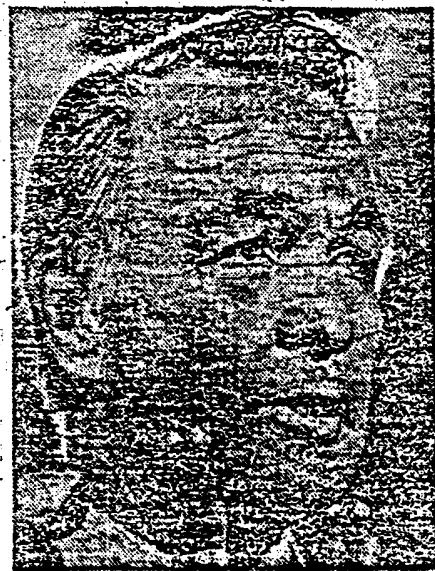
Whatever it is, intelligence is something that is not always practiced by the director of the CIA, who knows perfectly well that the Foli act is not compromising the security of this country. The CIA can withhold anything it deems to be security information. To punch holes in a good law because of the perceptions of some shaky banana republic regime is unconscionable.

The admiral also wants to strengthen a law for punishing what he calls traitors, people who disclose intelligence information. He would, for instance, prohibit before the fact disclosure of CIA misdoings like those gleaned from the famous Pentagon Papers published by *The New York Times*.

But the most serious problem at hand was caused by the pen of Admiral Turner who changed the policy of former CIA Director George Bush by allowing the agency to recruit journalists for spy missions with the approval of the boss.

That boss told editors he has authorized the hiring of three journalists but that the use of these newspapermen was not consummated for other reasons. He was not in the least bit concerned that such action had compromised all objective United States foreign correspondents — even to the extent of endangering their lives at the hands of crazy foreign generals or ayatollahs who distrust a free press anyhow.

Admiral Turner was a classmate of President Carter some years ago at the U.S. Naval Academy. That seems to be the admiral's principal qualification for holding his present land-side assignment. In civvies, between wars, he has trenchcoat, will travel. The President ought to send him back to sea.



Adm. Stansfield Turner